2:Shryock H-4, 5 (no date) 1931 AF 14 Central China AF 14

TEMPLES TO GREAT MEN

Probably there has been no country where the cult of heroes has been more fully developed than in China. Practically every Chinese god is a deified hero, often a historical character. But while some heroes are worshipped as gods, many more have never received divine rank and are offered sacrifices simply for their deeds as men, not only by their descendants, but by the people generally, or by non-family groups who feel specially obligated or attached to them.

This has always been encouraged by the government, since it holds up examples of good men for public emulation and encourages virtue by keeping alive the memory of great deeds. Doubtless there is also the feeling that benefit may accrue to the worshippers from the increased power of the hero in the next world. In fact, this hero worship is the preliminary stage on the road to godhead, and may be considered a sort of elimination contest in which the survivors, through their efficiency in answering prayer, receive deification as their reward. The decree announcing their promotion and rank was issued by the emperor, but probably he merely gave his approval to a popular attitude which already existed. The founder of a new line, for instance, might deify his ancestors, but I do not believe a popular cult was ever established in this way, or owed its success to the fiat of the emperor alone.

However, there is a notable exception to this process of the deification of popular heroes. Confucius and the long list of his disciples whose tablets

[p.45] [p.44 is blank]